

How do you prepare a portfolio? How do you present yourself?

Always remember that the arts celebrate differences – that in the arts, it's actually good to be different. There is nothing worse than an artist who copies the style of other artists or is stuck in the same art rut year after year. The most successful artists are those who stand out by mastering technique and by being unique.

When you enter a juried exhibit or approach a non-profit gallery to propose a show or to be represented in a retail gallery, there are a lot of things to remember. Many of them are just good common sense. Individuality and professionalism are necessities. Tonight we're going to talk about many of these things and I hope, leave time for questions at the end.

First of all – we'll consider two major types of venues that you might be interested in applying to and one long shot: nonprofits, retail galleries and the long shot - museums.

Non-profits: Include places in Salt Lake such as, Salt Lake City Arts Council, Utah Arts Council, Salt Lake Art Center, The City Library and Art Access. Non-profits generally take proposals from the public once or twice a year, with the exception of the SLAC, which will look at portfolios, periodically.

- **Finch Lane (SLCAC)** asks for proposals twice a year. (March 13 is the next deadline.) They consider Utah artists, not only SLC artists. Very important to them (and everyone else!) is good slides. A note on slides – both SLCAC and UAC periodically host workshops on producing good slides. I also received an e-mail from Chris Baczek who will shoot slides for artists. Her contact # is baczekc@hotmail.com
- **Utah Arts Council** has a few openings per year for its Rio Gallery. They only have group shows. The rest of their schedule is used for state shows and competitions. Call Laura at 533-3582 for more info.
- **Salt Lake Art Center** focuses on contemporary art and has no formal application process. They will accept portfolios and Rick Collier and Jim Edwards have been known to make studio visits and give feedback on art. The Art Center also contracts with artists to provide workshops, etc.
- **The City Library** chooses shows according to the needs and interests of the community, artistic quality and suitability of format for each library's physical space. Portfolios should be submitted within the two-week period prior to the following deadlines: April 10 and October 10.

- **Art Access Gallery** extends one call for entry each year – due July 1. The schedule is chosen at that time for the following calendar year. Because the Art Access mission is to provide arts opportunities for artists both with and without disabilities, a committee will balance the schedule with artists with and without disabilities, emerging and established artists and artists representing other underserved populations. Ruth sometimes visits artist studios. After the Gallery Committee evaluates proposals, feedback is given to artists, upon request.

Retail Galleries: These galleries generally have a point of view – contemporary, landscape, historic, cutting edge, traditional, Utah art, regional or national art, etc. They need to successfully sell art. Non-profits don't need to, so they can generally show more personal, unusual art, installations and exhibits that deal with community issues.

The longer established retail galleries like Phillips, Dave Erickson's and A Gallery have a longstanding "stable" of artists. This is not to say that periodically they won't consider other artists. Some, like Phillips will.

These are the essentials, if you are planning to apply to a retail gallery **or** a non-profit, actually:

- Check out all galleries. Decide where your art might reasonably fit. Where would you feel comfortable? Look for similar art, not the same art.
- Call the gallery that you settle on. Talk to someone who can tell you what the gallery's policy is on looking at new artist work. Do not just drop in.
- If you make it this far, you should have a portfolio and a body of work ready.
- Your portfolio should include a cover letter on white or cream stationery. There should be nothing gimmicky in your portfolio whatsoever. The next item should be your very excellent slides. If the slides are not good, if the art is not good, a gallery will look no further at this point. Digital images are also a real plus. Retail and non-profit galleries like digital images, which are handy for publicity purposes. Make sure that your slides are labeled with title, dimensions, media and name. Slides should be numbered and a hard copy of slides should be included in your portfolio. Work shown in the slides should be current. Galleries want to know what you are doing now and that you are consistent. Ask galleries if they prefer slides or digitals.
- Next in your portfolio will be a resume and or a biography. The goal is to be interesting but honest. This art community is very small. This resume and bio should contain the following info.

Education

History of shows

Collections

Gallery Affiliations

Awards

Commissions

Publications

- The next portfolio item should be an artist's statement which will explain why and how you make the art that you do. (More on this coming up.)
- Retail galleries that are newer may provide more opportunity for new artists than long established ones.
- Newer galleries may not schedule as long in advance. Many places schedule a year and a half to three years ahead for shows.

Museums: Believe it or not, there are also possibilities for artists to show in Utah museums. At the **Utah Museum of Fine Arts**, proposals do come in once in a while. They should be directed to the exhibition manager. Also, museum staff members may bring proposals to the exhibition committee, where the proposals will be voted on. There is a large hall in the UMFA that is designated for Utah art. Large-scale paintings are welcome there. Usually artists who show there have large work, are well-known and/or connected to the U of U or museum in some way – such as Bonnie Sucec, Tony Smith or Brian Kershisnik who are scheduled to show there. The **Museum of Utah Art & History** on Main Street may even provide more opportunity. As a newer museum, **MUHA** would definitely explore proposals from the public. Proposals must be relevant, however, to the museum's mission. Proposed exhibits should explore Utah's history through art. Remember that current events are also history!

- **Whichever of the above you submit a portfolio to, remember to include a SASE for the gallery to return your portfolio! And one last item – please use correct spelling and grammar. Nothing turns off a gallery quicker than a sloppily written portfolio or proposal.**